

## ACADEMIC COUNCIL REPORT

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**SESSION:**

Public  
Non-Public

  

**ACTION REQUESTED:**

Decision  
Consultation  
Information

  
  

**TO:** Academic Council

**DATE:** September 24, 2019

**FROM:** Olivia Petrie, Assistant Vice-President, Student Life

**SUBJECT:** Responding to the death of a student procedures – written consultation

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**ACADEMIC COUNCIL MANDATE:**

- Under the Policy Framework, consistent with the “Duty to Consult” under section 10(5) of the UOIT Act, Policy Owners must consult with Academic Council before presenting draft policy instruments to the approval authority for approval.
- We submit this report and a draft of the: 1) Procedures for responding to the death of a student to request your consideration of the draft before it is presented to Administrative Leadership Team for approval.

**PURPOSE OF POLICY INSTRUMENT:**

1. **Procedures for responding to the death of a student** – Establishes the process for addressing the human and operational aspects of a Student death in a way that respects the privacy needs of the Student and their family and ensures a timely, supportive and co-ordinated response.

**SUMMARY/RATIONALE OF KEY AMENDMENTS:**

In January 2012, the university established a [procedure](#) to help the community respond to the death of a student in a coordinated and supportive way. Over time, some of the details have become out of date, and we have found other aspects that required further clarity and specificity.

The revisions to the procedures include:

- Clarifying the key positions and roles that will assist in the response

- Elaborating on the steps to be taken when reporting on a student death, in the coordination of the response, and in the handling of communications
- Building in further consideration of the supports that may be needed for students, faculty and staff who may be affected by a student death
- Formatting the text to conform to the university's Policy Template

**CONSULTATION:**

- Online consultation (Sept 3 to Sept 17)
- Academic Council – written consultation (Sept 24)
- PAC - deliberation (October meeting TBA)
- ALT for approval (November 12)

**COMPLIANCE WITH POLICY/LEGISLATION:**

- N/A

**NEXT STEPS:**

- Written comments via email at [policy@uoit.ca](mailto:policy@uoit.ca).
- Documents to be reviewed in the future consultation schedule:
  - i. Policy Advisory Committee (October – TBA)
  - ii. Administrative Leadership Team (November 12)

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**SUPPORTING REFERENCE MATERIALS:**

- Procedures for Responding to the Death of a Student

Classification	ADM 1399.01
Parent Policy	N/A
Framework Category	Administrative
Approving Authority	Senior Leadership Team
Policy Owner	Vice-President, Academic and Provost
Approval Date	January 2012
Review Date	To be assigned
Last revised	July 2019
Supersedes	N/A

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## RESPONDING TO THE DEATH OF A STUDENT

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### PURPOSE

1. The University's guidelines for Responding to the Death of a Student outline the process for addressing the human and operational aspects of a Student death in a way that respects the privacy needs of the Student and their family and ensures a timely, supportive and co-ordinated response.

### DEFINITIONS

2. "Student" means any individual registered as a Student, in accordance with the academic regulations of the University.  
 "University Member" means any individual who is:
  - Employed by the University ("Employee");
  - Registered as a Student ("Student");
  - Holding an appointment with the University, including paid, unpaid and/or honorific appointments; and/or
  - Otherwise subject to University policies by virtue of the requirements of a specific policy (e.g. Booking and Use of University Space) and/or the terms of an agreement or contract.

### SCOPE AND AUTHORITY

3. These Procedures apply to all University Members at the University.
4. The Vice President, Academic and Provost or successor thereof, is the Policy Owner and is responsible for overseeing the implementation, administration and interpretation of these Procedures.

## **PROCEDURES**

### **5. Reporting**

- 5.1.** If a University Member becomes aware of the death of a Student, or suspected death of a Student, the matter must immediately be reported to the Assistant Vice-President, Student Life (AVP Student Life).
- 5.2.** The AVP Student Life will in turn notify the Dean of the faculty in which the Student is enrolled (the Dean), as well as the President, Provost, Registrar, VP (External Relations), Director, Office of Campus Safety and Security (Director, OCSS).
- 5.3.** The AVP Student Life, together with the Director, OCSS and the Registrar, will then verify that the death has occurred, confirm the Student's status at the University, and obtain any additional details that may be available at that time to aid in the University's response.
- 5.4.** Once the death has been verified, the AVP Student Life will contact 1) the Dean, 2) VP (External Relations) and 3) the Registrar to co-ordinate the University's response.
- 5.5.** The Dean (or delegate) will serve as the single point of contact for the Student's family and members of the campus community in co-ordinating the University's response.
- 5.6.** The Registrar will provide information from the Student records to assist in the response, including contact information for the family, course schedule and photo where available.
- 5.7.** The AVP Student Life will work closely with the Dean, VP External Relations and Registrar to ensure the following:
  - 1.0** The information conveyed is accurate and appropriate under the circumstances,
  - 2.0** The evolving needs of the community are assessed on an ongoing basis, and
  - 3.0** The University's overall response proceeds in a timely, supportive and co-ordinated manner.
- 5.8.** The Director, Communications (or delegate) will act as the official spokesperson in dealing with news media and with queries from the external community; the Manager, Communications will also disseminate (as appropriate) the information about the Student's death to the University community.
- 5.9.** Other University Members, including the Emergency Management Response Team, may be notified on a need-to-know basis.
- 5.10.** At all times, the wishes of the family and the privacy of the Student's personal information must be protected, and no information regarding the circumstances of the Student's death, funeral arrangements, their status as a Student shall be released to third parties by anyone other than the Director, Communications.

## 6. Co-ordination of the University's Response

6.1. The AVP Student Life, in partnership with the Dean, will work with the following groups in order to minimize as much as possible the administrative activities that would be required of the family of the deceased.

- 6.1.1 **Dean's office**, to serve as the single point of contact with the Student's family or next of kin, contacting the Student's family and expressing the University's condolences, both verbally and in writing, consulting with the family on the release of information to the campus community and media (if requested), obtaining details of the funeral arrangements, arranging for the removal of the Student's personal effects in the areas identified below, and assisting with any concerns the family may have;
- 6.1.2 **Dean's office** to contact relevant University Members (e.g. faculty advisors, advisors and deans in other faculties where the Student may be taking courses, and instructors and TAs for the courses the Student was enrolled in) to relay general information about the death, provide special messaging for them to relay to Students, and address any concerns or need for support University Members may have; to obtain any assignments; and to remove the Student's address from any faculty mailing lists;
- 6.1.3 **Registrar's office or Graduate Studies office** to deactivate the Student's record, withdraw the Student from classes, clear the Student's account (which may include providing a refund for tuition paid in the current and future academic terms), provide information regarding the Student's OSAP loans, clear any outstanding library and parking fees, generate tax notices, remove the Student's address from any University mailing lists, and other details as required;
- 6.1.4 **Student Mental Health services** to provide professional support and counselling to Students, work with academic advisors to reach out to Students who may be affected by the death (whether individually or in groups where appropriate), and liaise with faculty to arrange accommodations for Students who may be profoundly affected by the loss and provide referrals to outside agencies as necessary;
- 6.1.5 **Human Resources** to arrange for on-site counselling for faculty and staff and/or referrals to the University Employee Assistance Plan.
- 6.1.6 **International student services (when applicable)**, to notify the embassy/consulate of the deceased, liaise with Citizen and Immigration Canada, and provide other assistance as needed;
- 6.1.7 **Access and Privacy office** to co-ordinate disclosure of the contents on the Student's laptop, and the Student's email account.
- 6.1.8 **University Student Union** to facilitate any applicable insurance claim and co-ordinate Students' expressions of condolences to the family as appropriate;
- 6.1.9 **Residence manager (when applicable)**, to contact roommates and floormates, arrange for on-site counselling support where needed, and arrange for the removal or storage of the Student's personal effects.

**6.1.10 Campus security** to liaise with law enforcement in obtaining details that may assist in the University's response, where appropriate.

- 6.2** Where the University receives notice about the death of an alumni, or a prospective or former Student, the AVP Student Life will work with the Dean, Registrar and Alumni Office as necessary to ensure that the Student's records are cleared, convey the University's condolences to the family, and consult with them on the release of information to the campus or alumni community.

#### **Media Relations**

- 7.1** The Director, Communications will be the main point of contact for inquiries from news media and the external community concerning the Student's death. Unless there is a compelling reason not to do so, and after the Dean has consulted with the family, the Director will co-ordinate the circulation of an announcement about the Student's death to the University community through campus email. The message may contain the Student's name and program, date of death, funeral arrangements, counselling support, commemorative activities, and potential donations or in memoriam gifts, as appropriate.
- 7.2** The Director will also contact the appropriate representative in the campus facilities department and security office to arrange for the flags to be lowered to half-mast on the day of the funeral or memorial service.
- 7.3** The Director will also advise Durham College's Executive Director, Communications and Marketing (or delegate) of the University's announcement about a Student's death.

#### **MONITORING AND REVIEW**

- 8.** These Procedures will be reviewed as necessary and at least every three years. The AVP Student Life, or successor thereof, is responsible to monitor and review these Procedures.

#### **RELEVANT LEGISLATION**

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

#### **RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES & DOCUMENTS**

N/A